

Collateral Damage in The Tension between the U.S. and China

Palmer Dinner Discussion Group
Texas Medical Center, Houston, TX

May 8, 2020

Professor Steven Pei
University of Houston
Inaugurate Chair, United Chinese Americans

Our Speaker -- Dr. Steven Pei

Multi-disciplinary skills across both the technical community and diverse socio- and business-economic communities

- **Bell Labs** -- industrial research administration -- **16 years**
- **University of Houston** -- academic research administration -- **25 years**
 - ✓ Physics; Electrical & Computer Engineering
 - ✓ Opto-electronics: Semi-conductors, Nanomaterials
- **Chinese community in Houston** – civic engagement – **20 years**
- **Business & technology** – commercialization of high tech – **20 years**
 - 2 Houston mayoral efforts to partner with China for joint economic development and environmental protection
- **US/China Conflict** – national & regional awareness – **3+ years**
 - Challenges/racial profiling toward senior Chinese scientists
 - Particular emphasis -- Houston biomedical community

Outline of Talk

I. Challenges to Research Excellence and US Dominance

- ❑ Case Study: Biomedical – MD Anderson Cancer Center and Texas Medical Center

II. More Collateral Damages

- ❑ Case Study: COVID 19 – Houston and Texas

How Chinese Americans are trapped in between !

How it might impact on the American Competitiveness !

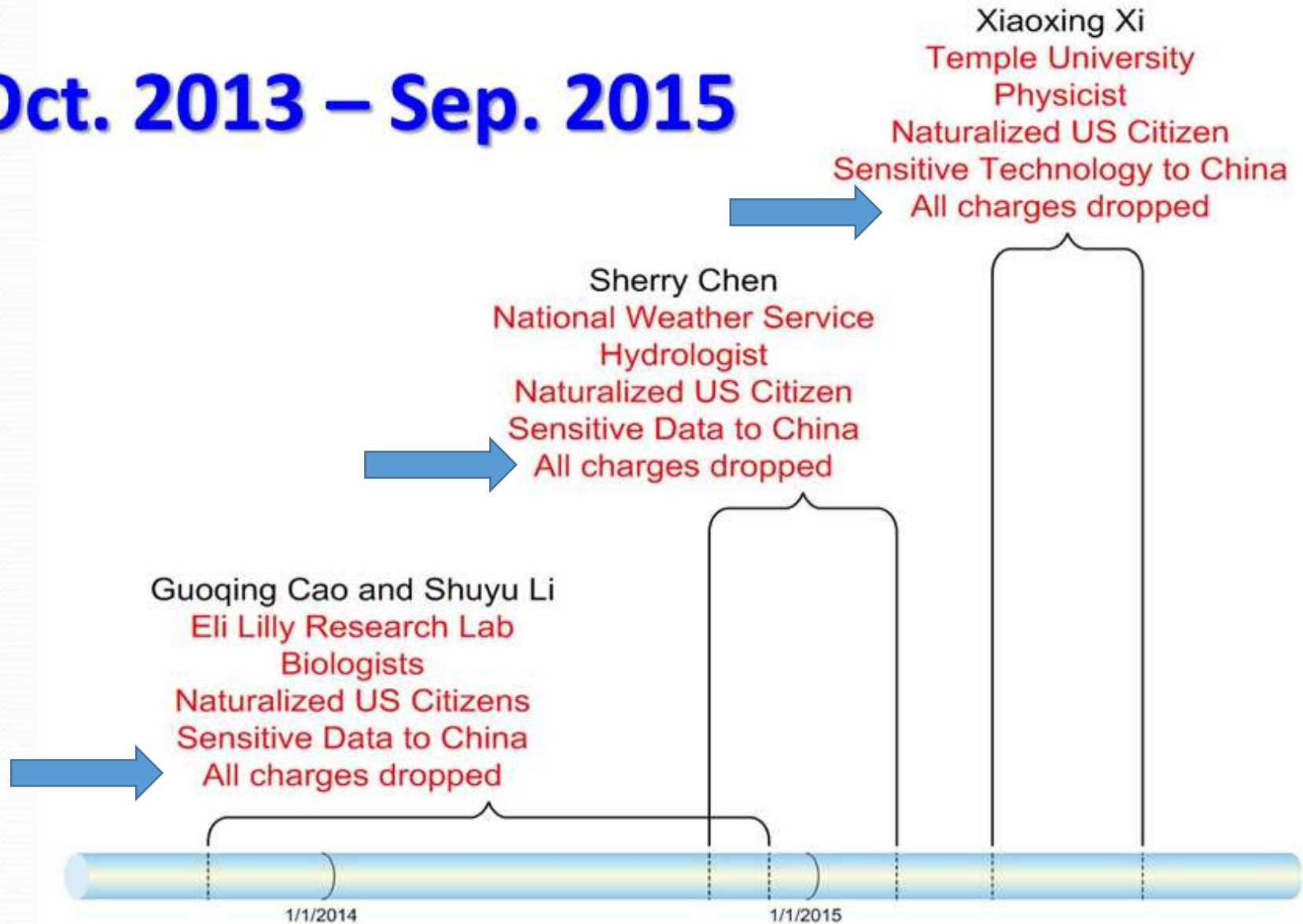
Prosecuting Chinese “Spies”

An Empirical Analysis Of The Economic Espionage Act

by Andrew Kim, May 2017

- 136 cases involving 187 individual defendants from 1997 to 2015
- The percentage of people of Chinese decent charged under the Economic Espionage Act has **tripled since 2009**, to 52%;
- Defendants of Asian decent convicted of espionage received **sentences over twice as severe** as those of other ethnicities;
- **22% of people of Asian decent** charged with economic espionage **were never convicted of espionage**.

Oct. 2013 – Sep. 2015



Part I

Challenges to Research Excellence

Case Study: Biomedical – MD Anderson & TMC

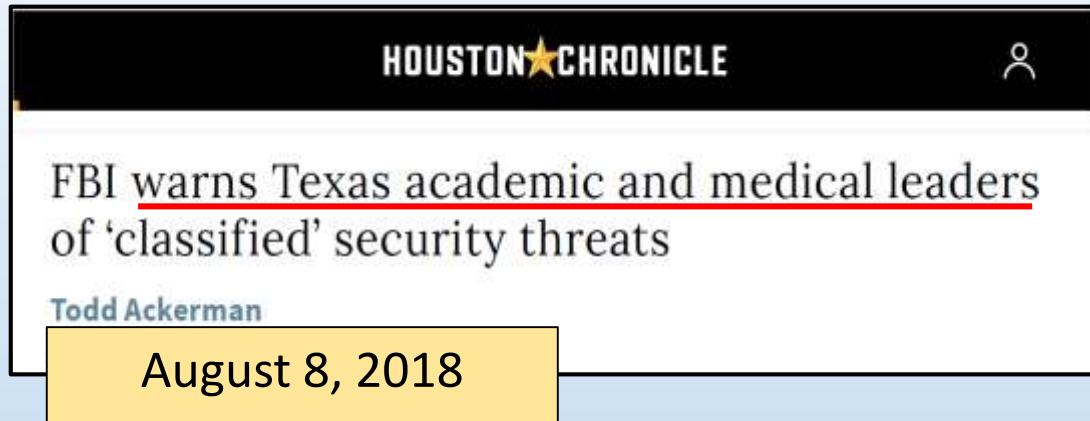
2018 -- Launch of Heavy Federal Involvement



FBI Director Wray:

- China Threat is a Whole-of-Society Threat
 - ✓ They use nontraditional collectors, especially in the academic setting -- professors, scientists, students across every discipline
- Takes a Whole-of-Society Response

Unprecedented FBI Regional Meeting



Unprecedented gathering:

- FBI warns 100+ top leaders of TX academic & medical institutions
 - ✓ Security threats from foreign adversaries
 - ✓ First step in initiative to be replicated around the country.

Gathering's focus:

- How institutions can better partner with the FBI
 - ✓ Prevent theft of intellectual property and research
 - ✓ Often sourced through internal threats.



Department of Justice

AG Jeff Session Announces CHINA INITIATIVE

November 1, 2018

- Led by **Assistant Attorney General John Demers**
- Comprised of Senior FBI Executive, Five U.S. District Attorneys and several other DOJ leaders, including **Assistant Attorney General Brian Benczkowski**
- Assertion is that China's "**Thousand Talents Program**" offers money to Asian American researchers to come to China & do same research
- **A year later, Andrew Lelling** (US District Attorney for Massachusetts)
 - Arrests **Dr. Andrew Lieber**, Chair of the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology at **Harvard University**
 - Afterwards, District Attorney Lelling says Participating in "Thousand Talents Program" **is NOT ILLEGAL, per se**

Investigations fill Asian American community with rumors, anxiety and fear.

Only One Investigation in TMC Reports Out in 2018



- Jan 2018
 - Security monitoring of **Dr. Keping Xie's** computer
 - Find what appears to be *an altered receipt*.
 - Forensics on 40 terabytes; uncover ***five suspect images*** of known child porn
- March 2018
 - **Houston Police Department** **sends “child porn case” back to UT police**
- April 2018
 - Dr. Xie and his wife resign from MDACC with their \$12 million in NIH grants
- June 2018
 - University of Arizona offers Xie \$332,000 salary to start a new department
- August 2018
 - District Attorney arrests Dr. Xie; direct result: loss of NIH grants & Arizona offer
- November 28, 2018: Harris County Grand Jury declines to indict Xie.

Takes All of 2018 for Asian American Community to Get FBI's Attention



- March 1, 2018, Fourteen Asian American organizations **request meeting with FBI Director Wray.**
- September 27, 2018, Asian Houstonians hold **educational forum with an FBI agent**, legal experts and academic leaders
- December 7, 2018, Five Asian American representatives **meet with the FBI at DC HQs** about economic espionage, racial profiling.

Ensuing publicity (Houston Chronicle) brings national attention to issues

2019 -- Academic Communities Begin to Weigh In

- **March: Two back-to-back Letters published in Science Magazine:**
 - “[Racial Profiling Harms Science](#)” by
 - ✓ Society of Chinese Bioscientists in America,
 - ✓ Chinese American Hematologist & Oncologist Network
 - ✓ Chinese Biological Investigators Society
 - “[Response](#)” by NIH Director and Senior Leadership
- **Feb – June: Statements by University Presidents/Chancellors**
 - Feb: UC Berkeley
 - Mar: Stanford, Univ Michigan
 - Apr: UC Davis
 - May: Univ Delaware, Rice, Yale, Univ Maryland
 - Jun: Case Western
- **September:**
 - **Sixty** academic societies, associations, and academies
 - ✓ Joint letters to **Directors of OSTP, NSF, NIH, DOE and DOD.**

2019 – Media Starts to Weigh In

Joint Chronicle & **Science** Exclusive Report

Exclusive: Major U.S. cancer center ousts 'Asian' researchers after NIH flags their foreign ties

By Mara Hvistendahl

April 19, 2018

- **April 26, 2019:** “MD Anderson was receiving Texas Public Information Act requests regarding this matter.
 - Believed it was in public interest to tell our comprehensive story to Chronicle first” – Peter Pisters
- **June 11, 2019,** 4 Asian American representatives meet with MD Anderson President Pisters and his senior staff

Prelude and Then NIH Driven Espionage Investigations

- 2011 - 2017
 - 2011: [Dr. Keping Xie sues MDACC](#); tenure renewed.
 - 2015: [Dr. Xifeng Wu files formal complaints](#); removed from dept. chair
 - Dec. 2017:
 - ✓ MD Anderson [voluntarily](#) gives FBI **10-yrs** of emails of 23 employees
 - ✓ [Dr. Xifeng Wu](#) is placed on administrative leave.
- 2018 – Eight Months Later
 - Aug. 2018: NIH notifies [over 10,000 “institutions”](#) of espionage concerns.
 - ✓ MD Anderson later notified of 5 researchers; ultimately ousts 4; [5th retires](#) in Spring 2019.
 - ✓ Baylor notified of 3 researchers; ultimately disciplines none.
 - NIH/FBI probes [180 researchers at 84 institutions](#).

Outcome to Date: Only **1** former Emory researcher
[indicted and charged with fraud](#)

Journalism Reports Case Study of Dr Xifeng Wu



- MD Anderson's Dr. Xifeng Wu prodigious author of some 540 papers cited >23,000 times in scientific literature.
- 87 of those papers are co-authored with scholars from 26 Chinese institutions.
- 2017 – 2019: “Investigation” finds she has
 - ✓ Her team member to help review some NIH proposals
 - ✓ Half-dozen foreign academic advisory roles.
- **She is branded an oncological double agent.**
 - [Peter Waldman](#), 6.13.2019.

- China had been recruiting Wu for 15 Years without success
- Dec '17, Wu was put on administrative leave.
- Jan '19, Wu retired from MDACC and joined Zhejiang Univ.

Universities failed to protect their Chinese faculty.
“When the pressure comes down, they throw
their researchers under the bus.” -- Steven Pei



National Science Foundation releases highly anticipated analysis by its JASON advisory group

China
Overreached

- Actions of the Chinese institutions have led to
 - lack of transparency, lack of reciprocal research collaborations
 - insufficient reporting of conflicts of interest.

U.S.
Overreacted

- “Controlled Unclassified Information” (CUI) is
 - ill-suited to the protection of fundamental research areas.
 - benefits of openness in research dictate against measures that would wall off particular areas of fundamental research.

December 19, 2019

Congress approves creation of two groups

A Panel to Coordinate between Government Agencies

- Led by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy,
- To harmonize actions by more than a dozen agencies to protect federally funded research projects.

A Roundtable to Coordinate between Government and Academics

- Convened by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine,
- Will bring academia, government and industry together to assess and mitigate the risks.

Part II

More Collateral Damages

Case Study: COVID 19 – Houston & Texas

We Asian Americans are not the virus.
We can and want to be part of the cure.
-- Andrew Yang

TX Congressional District 22 Candidate Uses Dangerous Racist Tactics in Election Campaign

After Trump Stops labelling Covid-19 the "Chinese virus" on March 23 2020



Behind in July
14th Republican
Primary Runoff

- Cynically resorts to inflammatory rhetoric
- dangerously stokes xenophobia and racism



TX Congressional District 35 Candidate Uses Offensive and Abusive Racist Language

April 2020



Tim's Oriental Seafood Market
San Antonio, TX

Vanessa Egle, the store co-owner said in disbelief:

- “[[William Hayward](#)] was “criticizing people wearing mask in the store.”
- Sticks his finger in my face and calls me a ‘stupid, f***** Asian b*****’ ”
- “I am a U.S. congressman. Who do you think you’re talking to?”

**Xenophobia and Racism
Brings out the Worst in People.
Lead to Hate Crimes**

“Who Killed Vincent Chin?”

A 1987 American documentary film Nominated for Academy Award



Vincent Chin, 27

May 18, 1955 – June 23, 1982

- June 19, 1982 -- mistaken to be Japanese by a Chrysler supervisor and a laid-off autoworker
- Beaten with a baseball bat, died 4 days later
- Murderers: \$3,000 fine, 3-years probation, no jail time
- Critical turning point for Asian-American civil rights
- Rallying cry for stronger federal **hate crime legislation**

Sam's Club Stabbing Suspect Thought Burmese Family was

'Chinese Infecting People with Coronavirus'

Midland, TX March 14, 2020



Now the Social Virus

NEED CURE
for the
Social Virus
Spreading in
Our Society



Six and Two Years Old



Zach Owen Risked His Life to Save the Boys



Recognize By-Stander Heroes on June 19

Asian American Community in Texas Rallies Bipartisan Support

Letter to Democratic & Republican
National Committee Chairs, April 2020

- Call upon all elected and appointed officials and candidates to **condemn blatantly racist campaign tactics**
- Call on all elected and political candidates to **demonstrate their commitment to keeping ALL communities safe and protected.**
- **Commit that saving America is the priority, not attacking Asian Americans** who are an integral part of America.
- May 7, 2020, **San Antonio City Council** unanimously passes a resolution affirming **commitment to the safety and well-being of all community members and denouncing covid-19 hate speech**

Nineteen Texas Asian American Organizations co-signed the Letter

- Asian Chamber of Commerce (ACC)
- Asian Culture and Education Society USA – Dallas
- Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association (APAPA) – Houston
- Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association (APAPA) – Texas
- Association of Chinese Professionals Foundation DFW (ACP Foundation) – Dallas/Fort Worth
- Chinese Community Center (CCC)
- eMgage – TX
- Fort Bend Chinese American Voters League
- Greater San Antonio Chinese Chamber of Commerce – San Antonio
- Greater San Antonio Society of Chinese Professionals – San Antonio
- Houston Chinese Alliance (HCA)
- Houston Asian American Political Action Committee (Houston 8020)
- Houston Guangxi Association
- Hu Bei Forks Association – Dallas
- Join Chinese College Alumni Association (JCCAA)
- OCA – Greater Houston
- Society of Chinese Bioscientists in America (SCBA) – Texas Chapter
- United Chinese Americans (UCA) – Houston
- VN TeamWork, Inc.

Eight National Asian American Organizations co-signed the Letter

- 80-20 Educational Foundation
- 80-20 National PAC
- 80-20 SuperPAC
- Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association (APAPA)
- Asian American Unity Coalition (AAUC)
- National Council of Chinese Americans (NCCA)
- OCA
- United Chinese Americans (UCA)

Partial List -- Asian American Donations

First Responders and Medical Facilities Receiving Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Supplies

- City of Bellaire Police/Fire department
- City of Houston
- Fire Station #78
- Harris County Sheriff's Office
- Precinct 5 Constable Office
- Beeler-Manske Clinic
- Center for Women's Health
- Colony Internal Medicine Associates
- Colonial Oaks at Pearland
- Dr. Mei Zhang Family Medicare
- Greater Houston Psychiatric Associates
- Energi Care
- Harris Health System
- HCA Healthcare Clear Lake
- Hillcroft Medical Clinic
- Houston Health Foundation
- Kelsey-Seybold Clinic with 24 Locations
- Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital
- Memorial Hermann Katy Hospital
- Memorial TMC/UT Health McGovern Medical School
- Methodist Hospital
- Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center
- Signature Care Emergency Rooms – 9 locations
- Sound Medical Clinic
- St. Luke's Hospital
- St. Luke's Hospital Anesthesiology Division
- St. Luke's Hospital, Pearland
- Sugar Land Donation Event to Mayor
- Texas Children Hospital
- Texas Children's Pediatric Clinic, Katy
- Partners (USAP)
- Welcome Family Medicine

Asian American Counter Measures



- 20,000 of the 50,000+ masks
- 20,000+ KN95 masks
- Second donation by Tsinghua Alumni Association (Beijing)
- April 24, 2020.



- 400 Protective gowns,
15,000 surgical masks and
\$7,500 for “Feeding Frontline
Families”
- to Memorial Hermann Foundation
- Second donation by the Joint Chinese
College Alumni Association (Taiwan)
- April 23, 2020.

Responses of Asian American Community



- “Asian Americans Salute Frontline Heroes” with 15,000 Free Meals in May
 - Honorary Chair: Mayor Turner
 - May 12 is the birthday of Florence Nightingale.
- May is the “Asian and Pacific American Heritage Month”
 - May 10 – 151st Anniversary of the Completion of Transcontinental Railroad.
 - May 23 – 38th Anniversary of the Murder of Vincent Chin.

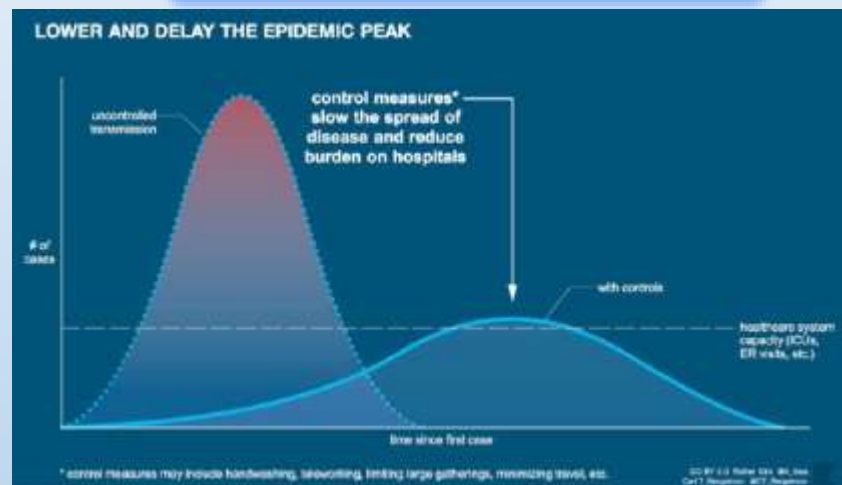
Contributions from Victims of NIH Investigations

Mach 12, 2020

6 lessons from China's Zhejiang Province and Hangzhou -- how countries can prevent and rebound from COVID-19

Dr. Xifeng Wu – former MD Anderson Department Head now at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, **China**

- Dean and Professor of School of Public Health
- Vice President of The Second Affiliated Hospital
- Director of National Institute for Data Science in Health and Medicine



These are the top talents that foreign countries have been trying to recruit, but unsuccessfully.” “Now we are helping foreign countries to accomplish what they could not do by themselves.

-- Steven Pei

Dean Xifeng Wu Playing Major Role in Global COVID Management from China

- Registering 15 million people in all cities in Zhejiang for the QR codes produced with the mobile app Alipay.
- Organizing Cloud Summit on Public Health with Harvard, Yale, Georgetown, American Public Health Association, Alibaba Foundation, Google Health.
- Collaborating with United Chinese Americans (UCA) on Tracy's Guide and webinars for the general public.

THE CHRONICLE
of Higher Education

Mach 18, 2020

Hounded Out of U.S., Scientist Invents Fast Coronavirus Test in China

A crackdown on scholars with ties to China has
triggered a reverse brain drain

“We Asian Americans are not the virus; we can
and want to be part of the cure.”

-- Andrew Yang

Thank you

Steven Pei

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